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An Effective End To Covert Operations

If Angola is an example, the days of wine and roses are over for the CIA. Covert operations carried out in secret are no longer possible under laws already on the books. Whether the Senate intelligence committee in its recommendations for CIA oversight, based on an extraordinary far-reaching investigation, faces up to this seems almost irrelevant.

Five years ago, even two or three years ago, when Angola in Southwest Africa was a Portuguese colony with Portuguese troops holding the line, there were no problems. The United States enjoyed a safe relationship with what had been for 40 years an obscure dictatorship.

Consider what has happened under the new dispensation. CIA Director William E. Colby goes to Capitol Hill and gives a secret briefing to the congressional committees. He tells them that \$25 million in American materiel has been sent to Angola and \$25 million more is to go. This is promptly leaked. Colby is convinced it was leaked out of his testimony. So immediately a debate breaks out with the charge that this is the beginning of another Vietnam. Resolutions are proposed to stop it immediately.

In his testimony Colby left no doubt that the Soviet Union was pouring in vast aid to help the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola. The Soviets had brought in at least 3,000 Cuban troops to fight with the Angolan Marxists. They are black-eyed and dark-skinned which gives them an edge over blonde, blue-eyed Russians.

Under a law passed a year ago, according to Colby, he had no choice but to inform the Congress of what the CIA was doing. He had no illusions about how long this information would be kept secret and his own reaction is that such covert acts are no longer possible.

Most startling to those who heard him was that from eight to ten African countries already have Cuban military contingents. This is in repayment to Moscow for the aid that keeps Cuba going. As one Latin-American authority who has several times visited Cuba and has talked with Fidel Castro put it to this reporter:

"Cuba could hardly exist for a month if Moscow's help was to cease. This means

oil, military weapons, advanced technology. If Moscow says, 'Send Cubans to African Country A and Country B', Castro complies. He has no choice."

Super-power rivalry exported to the far corners of the earth, as in Angola, is a deadly threat to the peace of the world. This was the stern word that China's Teng Hsiao-ping gave to President Ford in Peking. As these last days of 1975 draw to a close, the threat grows, in spite of the talk of detente.

What is the United States to do? Using Angola as an example, are we to let the game go to our opponents? This means denying assistance to the two factions fighting the Marxists.

Already the Angolan port of Luanda has been closed off to American war vessels that formerly used it as a re-fueling stop enroute to the Indian ocean. Before the opening of the Suez Canal it was of vital importance, the Navy believed. With American carriers too large to transit the Canal, the denial of Luanda still means a costly roundabout route.

One answer is to keep out and let the Russians take over. Sooner or later they will muck it up and the locals will turn against them. That always happens. This is a comforting thought, but it is not easy to document in light of Soviet action around the world.

The man who has to worry about the answer is no longer Colby. He was fired by President Ford. As soon as he is confirmed, George Bush, who has just come from his post in Peking where he was head of the liaison mission, will take over.

Shortly afterward Bush will confront the new requirements of Sen. Frank Church's intelligence committee for congressional oversight of CIA's activities. He will then, in cooperation with congressional leaders, have to determine what can be retrieved out of the wreckage of the agency left in the wake of shocking revelations of wrongdoing.

It is an unenviable assignment and particularly for one who will have at best a year in which to carry it out. But in a larger sense the question is one that confronts all Americans and not least the members of Congress.